

TOWN/COMMERCIAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Fiscal Year 2009

CLARIFICATION OF OUR CHARGE

The Town/Commercial Relations Committee (TCRC) has the following charge and approach to its responsibilities:

- We advise the Select Board and Town Manager on issues affecting commerce in Amherst and the business community.
- We provide a business perspective on changes to parking regulations and the assessment of parking needs in the Town.
- We act as a conduit for suggestions, comments and complaints for the Town's current business community.
- We perceive ourselves as a think tank, considering "big ideas" and futuristic possibilities for Amherst and responding to the needs of Town Meeting and Select Board for this thinking, but also lead the way.
- We are pro-business development because such development is an essential tool for protecting and enhancing the nature of Amherst. We want sustainable, smart growth, not growth for growth's sake; we are looking for businesses with a good fit to existing businesses, not superstores.

The Select Board needs to seriously consider recommendations and policy proposals brought forward by the TCRC, as we are one of the few citizen boards in Town directly addressing the local economy and advocating for the business community.

While a member of the TCRC is on the Parking Task Force, the TCRC has not recently been consulted on matters relating to Parking. We suggest that either the Select Board refer parking matters to us or amend our charge to remove the responsibility and reduce the number of members on the Committee accordingly.

DISCUSSIONS ENGAGED IN AND ACTIONS TAKEN

- Permitting process
 - Observed meetings of Zoning Board of Appeals;
 - Prepared an Executive Summary of Observations and Recommendations for the Select Board.
 - Plan to present in person to the Select Board.
 - Recommend a streamlining of the process to eliminate or greatly reduce the image of a Business un-friendly environment; and
 - Recommend the change of current practice of having Special Permits expire on Change of Ownership.

- Recommend a change to review process on existing Special permits to narrow the focus of review and not engage in a comprehensive detail review every time a permit is modified.
- 2009 Annual Town Meeting
 - Supported the rezoning articles presented to Town meeting.

POSITIONS OR INITIATIVES THAT THE TCRC ENDORSES

Zoning

- There is limited available land remaining for business development in the Town and as a result, real consideration should be given to rezoning remaining parcels for commercial/business uses.
- We are sensitive to the needs of abutters regarding traffic problems, sidewalks and other infrastructure issues. Our economic viability and business growth will only be corrected with a “Long Term” vision.
- The TCRC will continue to attend and audit the meetings of Amherst’s permitting boards and committees that are not televised to determine if the review process, questioning and conditions placed on commercial permit applications is efficient, fair and balanced.

Respectfully submitted

Town Commercial Relations Committee
 Mark L. Parent
 Chair
 10 December 2009